

Beacons of the Bible

Abraham in Egypt and at Gerar

By [Henry Law](#)

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"Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you." Genesis 12:13

Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sister." Genesis 20:2

When grace subdues the heart, a wondrous change ensues. Earth knows no greater. But words are weak to picture it. Images lend not sufficient aid.

Light shines, where once night brooded. Satan's chains no more enslave. The prison-bars are broken. Right principles direct. Right ends are sought. Right means are used. Life now is life indeed, for the man lives to God. Such is a feeble outline of the new creation.

But is sin therefore dead? Wounded indeed it is. But like the gashed snake it retains power to sting. Sometimes it revives in fearful strength. Though crippled, it strives to conquer. It may seem for a season to regain its hold, and win brief victory. It may roll the new man in the mire. But it cannot keep him down. Its real dominion is gone. Its existence only lingers, until full escape from this world delivers wholly from its touch.

Where is the saint who is not conscious that the foe still lives? Witness the closet of the man of God. What bitter humblings! what smittings of the breast! what sensitive laments! what writhing under the motions of corruption's filth! Tears, sobs, and cries are frequent. "When I would do good, evil is present with me." "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "God be merciful to me a sinner." Faithful Scripture warns of this constant conflict. It tells, that the heavenward march is over treacherous roads, where many pilgrims slip and stumble! Earnest exhortations call to watchfulness--to prayer--to use the shield of faith--to gird up the loins of the mind--to fight the good fight of faith--to give no place to the devil.

The honest page is often darkened, also, by recitals of sin's unexpected outbreak. Sudden eclipses hide the brightest orbs. The glittering star falls quickly from the sky. Waters lately so calm, cast up mire and dirt. Thus instances divulge, that sinful nature continues to be nature, even where grace has

undoubted seat.

This Beacon gives a graphic proof.

ABRAHAM appears. How marked with special favors! How enriched with heaven-born powers! How crowned, as God's distinguished child! Heir of what hopes! Laden with what treasures of high promise!

He dwelt in early youth, an idolater in an idolatrous land. In nature's darkness "he served other gods." Josh. 24:2. In due time the God of glory reveals Himself. He calls his servant to leave Chaldea's godless scenes. He guides to a home typical of heavenly rest. The pilgrim holds as a staff, grand promises and assurances. Light, bright as Bethlehem's star, beckons onward. The distant horizon sparkles with illimitable blessedness. His ears hear heaven's pledge, "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great--and you shall be a blessing, and I will bless those who bless you, and curse him that curses you, and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Genesis 12:2-3. Could faith ask more? Could heaven give richer hope? Surely the owner of such promises will stand as a fortress garrisoned with all strength! He will have feet, which never can be moved--a hand, which never can hang down--a heart, which never can know doubt! All fear must be forever banished! Far raised above misgivings and alarms, this blessed one will boldly march on solid ground throughout earth's pilgrimage.

The trial comes. Grace must be tried. Rare is the faith which boldly resists. Happy the hero, whose eye never looks off from Jesus. Beloved, you must encounter winds and billows. Heed them not. Gaze only on your Lord. Thus you will never sink.

The trial comes. Provisions fail. Famine grievously prevails. Abraham meditates to seek sustenance in Egypt's fertile fields. Is this an act of faith? He holds the pledge, "I will make of you a great nation." Shall he tremble, lest dearth of food should nip this sure hope? But he distrusts, and he turns his face towards Egypt.

We find that one sin leads to more. Temptations seldom come alone. One knocks. If the door be opened, a troop will enter.

It was thus with Abraham. When he draws near to heathen-land, he looks on Sarah. Her countenance is lovely. Beauty so rare will rivet admiration. In her attractiveness he sees danger for himself. He reasons, she is mine--she may not be another's, until I be removed. If I be slain, what will check the wishes of a foreign suitor! Therefore surely I shall die.

Has then the promise been recalled, "I will make of you a great nation?" But faith succumbs to fear. He suggests falsehood to his wife. "Say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and my soul shall live because of you."

Genesis 12:13.

Thus in full sight of evil he proceeds. The net is spread before his eyes. He knows it, yet he flees not. Evasion promises safety. The evasion involves falsehood. Untruth is his scheme of security in Egypt. The plan is godless, yet he scruples not to act it out.

Reader! perhaps you bask in sunshine of especial favors. Perhaps you boast, that the promises are yours. Still you are not above temptation's reach. You still may tamper with sad sin. Abraham thus sinned. Beware.

The land is reached. Sarah is seen, and eyes admire. Her lovely countenance is praised. Pharaoh hears. Into his palace she is conducted. The denial of the wife shields Abraham. But Sarah totters on the brink of foulest shame.

The Lord interposes. In spite of themselves the culprits are rescued. Great plagues trouble the king, and all his court. The cause is revealed. The pretended sister is in truth a wife. The conniving patriarch is summoned. What shame would cover him, when thus a heathen's lips reprove! "What is this, that you have done unto me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?" Genesis 12:18. Why did you lay this trap before my unconscious feet? Then safe from injury the patriarch is dismissed.

Sad is this sight. The child of God--the heir of heaven--the chosen progenitor of the world's Savior is downcast in discovered guilt. He stands abashed before a worshiper of stocks and stones. What shame would fill his heart! He had distrusted the living God, whose power was boundless--whose hand was never-failing refuge. He had brought plagues upon a guiltless house. Merited reproach now stings him to the quick! Where will he hide his face? What time will dry his penitential tears? Surely henceforth his trust will be unfailing--his courage will never flinch again--his zeal for pure truth will be unquenchable. Untruth will he hated, as a vile monster--the touch of falsehood will be feared as a plague-spot.

Is relapse possible into this identical sin? He knows not man's corruption, who cries, 'It cannot be.' While life remains the tempter will renew attack. He will seek again the crevice through which once he crept. He will mark the chinks which once his arrows pierced.

Time rolls on its course. Abraham deepens in the knowledge of his God. Repeated favors cheer him. In combat against mighty kings, heavenly power befriends him. He fights--they are thwarted and flee. After the victory, he is commanded to reject all fear. He hears the strength-inspiring word, "I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward." Genesis 15:1. He is told that his ardent longings shall be gratified. Against hope an heir would be born. Isaac shall gladden his home. "In him shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

He witnesses, also, God's dreadful judgments on the guilty plain. He hears terrific overthrow denounced. He sees the execution. Early in the morning he revisits the place, where he had stood before the threatening Lord. "He looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and towards all the cities of the plain, and behold, and lo! the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." Genesis 19:28. Thus the mercies of God's loving heart were spread before his wondering gaze. Thus, also, he saw the power of just wrath. What large experience! He will surely trust, and never fear what man can do! He will surely be impregnable to evil, and walk before God in perfect heart!

After this the Patriarch leaves Mamre and seeks Gerar. What motives prompted him, the story tells not. But he desired no settled home on earth. His eye looked far above. He lived a citizen of that "city, which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. 11:10.

Doubtless at Gerar, as in earth's every spot, ungodliness would be rife. His mind concludes, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place." Genesis 20:11. Instantly his early apprehensions live again. *His faith again recedes*. Death seems again at hand, because pretty Sarah is his wife. The old temptation re-spreads its wily bait. His former disgrace fades from his view. His grievous fall haunts him no more. The keen reproach of Pharaoh is forgotten. Distrustful of His God--forgetful of the past--reckless of the future--he sins again the same foul sin. *He rushes again into the same open net!* He suppresses again the truth. He exposes Sarah again to hideous crime. He opens the door for vile deeds in Gerar's palace.

Where is his heart! where his piety! where his faith! where his love towards God! where thought for Sarah and his own soul! where his delight in holy ways! where his abhorrence of all evil! where his remembrance of Egypt--of his fall--his disgraced dismissal! Alas! his lips again deceive. He frames the subterfuge, "She is my sister." Can faith so totter! Can the most faithful of God's children so belie his high profession! What man, however deep in Christian experience, can read and tremble not!

Sarah is brought to the king's house. Abraham is acquiescing. His heart seems dead. He forgets that the season is now near when Isaac shall be born.

But God is God still. His faithfulness, and love, and truth change not. Dreams on his bed affright Abimelech. It is revealed that Sarah is already wedded. Death is denounced on him and all his house, if the stranger's wife be violated. Guilty Abraham again stands humbled before a heathen prince. How would the words of dignified reproach sound witheringly through every corner of his heart! "What is this you have done to us? What have I done to you that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? This kind of thing should not be done!" Genesis 20:9

Reader! think of Abraham so reproached--for such a sin--at such a place, and by

such lips! Think, and remember self. The same snare may not endanger you. But snares to kindred offence are always near. Open falsehood may be indignantly rejected; but the occasions are many, when, by a wrongly-colored word--by an ambiguous term--by a misguiding emphasis--by a suppressed avowal, the hearer is intentionally deceived--truth is virtually denied--erroneous impressions are stealthily conveyed.

Reader! beware! The prevaricating whisper is repetition of the earliest sin. In every misleading word there is a likeness of the Devil--the liar from the beginning. The dishonest whisper may seem but a little bud; but God sees in it full-blown iniquity. The equivocation may be half-muttered; but in His ears it has a trumpet-tongue.

Who will not pray, "Set a watch, O Lord, upon my mouth, and keep the door of my lips." Ps. 141:3. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer." Ps. 19:14.

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